

# The NEWS LETTER

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No. 2

## What Are English Teachers Teaching?

A book which appeared several years ago, Max Eastman makes very sharp criticisms of the English professors. And in the face of that criticism he presents a graphic description of the plight which they find themselves in: the professors of literature know plainly on the defensive, may be seen from time to time hiding under the lids of their dingy desks, and poking around all the corners of their departments and among their old papers, trying to find out, if they can, just what subject it is they are teaching. Is it history, philology, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, ethics? It is not very well be any of these things because they are all more competently taught in other departments. And yet in a way it is to be all of them together in a good deal more. . . . It becomes us . . . for their sakes as well as our offspring's, to look into this matter very soberly and find out, if possible what, if anything, the professors of literature are teaching. After that we may be able to teach what they ought to teach." Eastman is very cock-sure; none of gloating is more than perceptible in the passage quoted. I have to disagree with his claim as a whole profoundly. He is here plainly right in saying that the professors are on the defensive, and I believe, further, that he is right about their conception of purpose. It is about the question that I want to speak; for my opinion, the creation of the English constitutes an immensely important step toward clearing up confusion.

The average English department performs not one function, but several functions which are really as diverse as those usually assumed under departments so remote as those of economics and psychology, or of sociology and government. The answer to the question, "What do the English professors teach?" is: several things, and many admirable things to teach, but many which are finally only peripheral to the teaching of literature. An even more discouraging factor is this: many English departments are not engaged in teaching literature at all.

I do not intend this last statement as a flashy and specious paradox. I mean it literally, and I believe that it can be thoroughly substantiated. I propose that we may divide the activities of English departments under three main headings. (I do not claim that this is the possible division, but I think it is essentially sound, and it is so simple to make my point.)

First, we may distinguish the various (Continued on Page 3)

## FACULTY COUNSELOR

When I am tired with teaching what I love,  
And crouch for safety in the official skull,  
I think that helping the young to choose is easy.  
Take French, I say. Take Latin, take Biology.  
Suggesting what I know the rules require.  
Not that you'll like it, but it's good for you.  
I see in a young eye a queer sudden glitter  
Once in five or six interviews—maybe seven.  
Can you tell me, a boy says, the sense of  
A rule for the rule's sake instead of my vision?  
Then it is not easy for me, and is more like life.  
I say, Sit down and tell me about your vision.  
The pale kind tire my head with ashen effort.  
But here is a bright fire to warm the hands at,  
Shouting against a gate we never locked.  
If he talks, I smile, and throw away the book.  
I plot without scruple, for the one life in seven,  
To open doors the spirit within wants open.

John Holmes  
Tufts College

## One Psychologist On Spelling

I should not like this note to be thought of as representing as accurate a statement of the problem as would be expected in a technical article. It happens that we are investigating aspects of this question of spelling in our own research program and expect to have some significant experimental data ready for publication in the near future.

I believe, however, that the studies on spelling made by psychologists warrant a few conclusions which should be of interest to those concerned with the problem.

At least six personality traits, all of which are largely hereditary factors in the individual, definitely enter the spelling problem. They are: intelligence, language aptitude, rote memory, visual imagery, auditory imagery, and kinesthetic imagery. Each of these plays a role in the total ability to spell, and a careful analysis of the spelling errors of any one individual will usually indicate roughly the relative strength or weakness of his endowment in each of these six functions. I should not like to conclude that no other factors of personality influence spelling, but these seem to be the most important ones.

In our own Research Project last year we found evidence, which we are trying to corroborate this year, which makes it seem probable that a child with a low endowment in both visual imagery and auditory imagery will find it almost impossible to learn to spell. If the child possesses an unusually good rote memory, it is possible for him to compensate somewhat for this lack by the simple expedient of contin-

uous drill. A boy of twelve who recently visited the Laboratory was able to spell words accurately if he had had them in his spelling assignments during the last two months. If they were words with which he had had no experience or words which he had not reviewed recently, his efforts to spell them were amazingly inadequate. This boy tested very low in both visual imagery and auditory imagery. Since these two functions are far more a function of heredity than training, it seems wise to assume that too strict an insistence by teachers on correct spelling may, in many cases, be analogous to forcing a poorly coordinated boy to make a football letter before giving him a passing grade.

To say that nothing can be done in such cases is not quite true. But at least these points seem obvious. In the first place, teachers should be able to ascertain the student's endowments in these six abilities and use such methods as have been devised for compensating where modest or low endowments are found. I feel certain, however, that there are many cases in which correct spelling for practical purposes may be considered impossible; or at least that the effort required to master it could be far more advantageously spent in other ways. I have known students who wrote exceedingly well, but all of whose training was directed toward trying to learn to spell when it might much more profitably have been spent developing their more marked abilities for creative writing.

I hope you will find this an adequate reply to your request recently submitted to me.

Cordially yours,  
ERNEST M. LIGON  
Union College.

## Preparation for English in College

Following is the gist of a statement which appeared last month in "Midland Schools," a journal of elementary and secondary education published in Des Moines. The specific purpose of this statement was to lend the support of teachers of English to teachers of foreign language, in the belief that our interests are closely allied, and that if foreign languages sink we in English shall scarcely be able to swim. A matter of this sort might be very appropriate for the "News Letter." It is conceivable that at the next meeting of the CEA our national group might wish to lend its support also.

Norman Foerster  
The State Univ. of Iowa

"It is the judgment of the undersigned college departments of English, based on long and wide experience, that certain high school subjects are conducive to success in undergraduate and graduate work in English. By success is here meant the full attainment of the student's capabilities.

"It is not suggested that students who pursue such studies in high school will invariably rank high in college, or that students who do not pursue them will invariably rank low in college. Much of course depends on the quality of the teaching and the quality of study (the degree of aptitude and effort) throughout the educational process. But when these are equal it will be found, in our opinion, that attainment of our objectives depends largely upon the students' high school programs.

### Subject Matter

"The high school subjects that lead most certainly to success in the collegiate and professional study of English appear to be the following:

(1) **English and Speech.** The student should have been trained to speak with poise, to write with correctness, to read with comprehension, and to enter sympathetically into his literary heritage through the study of selected masterpieces of English and American literature.

(2) **Latin, and French or German.** The student should have secured a good understanding of the Latin language, its grammar and syntax, of the relation of Latin and English, and of Roman civilization and literary art as exemplified in the *Aeneid*. In French or German, he should have acquired ability to read simple prose with ease and accuracy, and have thus prepared himself for college courses in French or German literature.

(3) **Other Subjects.** From the study of history, he should have acquired a sense of the continuity of civilization, of the changing inter-

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Among the multitude of them that shall be damned, professors will make a considerable party.

Some bad fishes, nay, I doubt a great many, will be found in the net of the gospel at the day of judgment. Watch and be sober, professors.

From John Bunyan  
his sermon The Strait Gate

## EDITORIAL

Although earlier issues of the News Letter have printed and reprinted the draft of our CEA constitution as finally adopted, enquiries by post card and letter reach the Secretary, asking first the limitations upon membership, and second, the amount of dues. The balance of the questions concern issues of the News Letter.

Art. III of the constitution, adopted at New Orleans for a trial year, reads as follows: Membership shall be limited to (a) those already enrolled at the time this constitution goes into effect; (b) teachers in four-year colleges of recognized standing who are teaching classes in English Literature or English Composition at the undergraduate level; (c) those who have retired from such teaching as defined above either by reason of age or in order to devote themselves to imaginative writing or literary criticism; (d) chairmen of English departments in such colleges who have responsibility for such teaching as is described above.

Art. V. Dues shall be determined by vote of the members at any annual meeting and shall be effective until changed by such vote at a later annual meeting. Members in arrears of dues for a full year shall be dropped. (At the first annual meeting it was voted that dues for the current-year shall be \$2.00).

The two excerpts from John Bunyan which head this editorial column were gleaned for us by Franklin B. Williams, instructor at Georgetown University. On his conscience let them rest.

Our attention is called to the fact that the parody, "Two voices are there," reprinted in the January News Letter, may also be found in the article on "Parody" in the Encyclopedia Britannica, 14th ed. It is by E. V. Knox, and first appeared in "Punch".

The informality of this periodical, and its fortuitous format make apologies for any of its sins of omission or commission quite superfluous. Yet its editor cannot but be uncomfortably conscious, now and then, of a lack of team-work between the paper's date-line and the actual month of issue. He is reminded of student comment upon a visiting lecturer. 1st student: "Too damn long-winded." 2nd student: "You gotta say for the poor old boy there wasn't any clock on the wall." 1st student: "Well, there was a calendar right where he could see it." Our January issue was held in hope of repercussions from the Annual Meeting, and our February issue has not caught up because of editorial pneumonia, and consequent incarceration by a medical man who recalls his own undergraduate English with complete lack of sympathy.

Who was Josiah Gilbert Holland? A book bearing that title\* lies upon the office desk and proves to be a biography and critical appraisal of the works of one of America's most popular and financially successful writers. Boil the name down to "J. G. Holland", author of "Bittersweet", "Timothy Titcomb's Letters", seven published volumes of essays and five forgotten novels and, if one is over fifty years of age, vague memories begin to stir. Over ninety thousand copies of the narrative poem "Bittersweet" were sold, and at least half a million copies of the Titcomb letters, at a time in our literary history when such figures meant not merely a best seller, but the best seller by a considerable margin. As a popular lecturer Holland's name outranked most of those of his time, though the American Lyceum was then in its hey-day. As a newspaper editor in New England and in New York, and as one of the first editors of "Scribner's Monthly", forerunner of "Century Magazine", he was a moral and social influence among millions of his fellow Americans.

Our biographer refers to him as "preeminently the apostle of the naive", and then says: "That Josiah Gilbert Holland remained priggish and prudish to the end of his days is all too abundantly attested. His provincial ethical standards; his subconscious Pharisaism; his incorrigible moralizing; . . . all these remained almost as irritatingly obtrusive at the end of his career as at the beginning." And yet "The good Dr. Holland, paragon of virtue and wholesomeness, could tell his millions of naive auditors and readers many things that they needed to know, and they would heed his words. He could tell them, as he did tell them, that European travel is more educative than American travel, that European manners are superior to American manners, that the Bible is not always to be taken too literally, and that good novels and good paintings and good plays have a humanizing effect that is much to be desired. Could Howells or James or Aldrich have told them the same things? Hardly! For Howells and James and Aldrich were not their gods . . .

\*Josiah Gilbert Holland in Relation to His Times; by Harry Houston Pechham; Univ. of Pennsylvania Press. pp. 220. \$2.50

and did not speak their language. Josiah Gilbert Holland was a prophet with honor among his own people—the naive—and therein lay his unique value."

Holland is very dead; and Whitman, whom he despised, and Poe, whom he questioned, and Thoreau, whom he patronized, still live. Who is there among our professors of literature who can isolate and define that ingredient in any work of literary art which enables it to survive throughout successive generations of changing human taste? What is the spark of vitality in one of Dicken's novels that is lacking in another? Exactly what persisting quality does Hawthorne possess, which Cooper—or even Henry James—did not? Why is Penrod still a living boy and the Gentleman from Indiana a very dead man? We ask you!

## Criteria of Good Writing

What are the criteria of good writing? What indeed? What not? 'An adequate vocabulary' you suggest. This is as essential to a writer as good tools to a plumber, good instruments to musicians, good and many color tubes to a painter. Besides, words are ideas and the difference between a hackneyed term and a novel turn is a difference of mind and soul. Also, an affectation, a preciosity or pedantry has a spiritual significance. Satisfaction with dull and commonplace words is a sign of a dull and commonplace mind unless, of course, they are arranged with special skill.

An earnest writer should make his home in a dictionary, get the biggest one he can and be everlastingly investigating it for more and better words or their more exact usage.

The 'ability to think himself in the place of the reader' is to me one of the most important and neglected phases of writing. Business men send telegrams and letters and circulars that simply confuse the recipient or bore him stiff. So authors turn out stories, novels, poems, essays, whatnot that leave the reader either baffled or bored.

I don't think this is so much lack of 'tactfulness' as imagination. Vast numbers of people never know whether they are interesting their audiences or not. Many do not care.

Style is, of course, always called the man, the personality; and it is much influenced by one's innate character; but it can be developed, as grace and vigor can be developed.

If young people could be convinced of the infinite power of language in every field of life they might take their writing courses with more enthusiasm.

The trouble, as I see it, is that most of the teachers have no idea of literary grace or power. They have been taught a mass of Don'ts and Shalt-nots, and given none of the impulse to fearless, passionate or gloriously natural expression.

As a boy I got fine marks in grammar for years, but nobody told me what grammar is. It came to me all of a sudden that grammar is in no sense a book of laws

except for cowards and dullards. Grammar is a book of fashions, a style-book describing the garments of thought that are usually worn by the most conventional people of a certain period. A good deal of it is like the rules of card-games: a set of arbitrary values that are agreed upon but have no authority.

The writer who does not want to attract attention to his style should garb it in the simplest, plainest, dark colors. But for carnival or battle or funeral or romance you want to forget conformity.

In my long years of schooling certain teachers stand out as geniuses because they had enthusiasm for life and for the subjects they taught. Most teachers have been so badly taught by such suppressors and rule-makers that they have no enthusiasm left to instill. They make stupid and unwilling students stupider and unwilling.

But the art and joy of writing depend on the opposite of suppression—expression, enthusiasm, fire, delight, grief, horror—the eagerness to move others to the feelings that move oneself. Composition should be exposition, conflagration.

But this is growing dangerously excited and I'd better stop. I can only say that it is easier to criticize what has been done and is doing than to lay out a course of study and justify it.

Rupert Hughes

## Experiments In Illinois

This year the Rhetoric Staff of the University of Illinois has established several experimental sections of freshman composition. There are two objects of the experimentation: (1) perhaps ultimately to make rather fundamental changes in the course, (2) to discover useful procedures of instruction which may be introduced in the present course.

One group of instructors will be teaching writing for oral presentation. Short expository themes will be assigned—each student to read a theme aloud in class at least once a week, so that he will have an audience to whom he may direct his writing and whose reaction he may get directly. There will be discussion of themes (and their presentation) by the students and the instructor. A rhetoric text will be used, but for reference only and for assignments. No book of models will be used. Class reading and criticism will take the place of conventional recitation on text assignments.

Another group will experiment with different types of readings and models for student composition. Students in these sections will follow the regular course assignments except in the models used. Regular sections use Literary Studies, Rhetoric Classes by Jefferson, Landis, Secord, and Ernst. Several instructors will experiment with student models drawn largely from the Green Caldron, a magazine of freshman writing published by the Rhetoric Staff of the University of Illinois. Several will employ temporary models by recognition.

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## Preparation for English in College

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ests of mankind, and of the interplay of the factors controlling events. The fields recommended are ancient history and modern European history. He should also have been introduced to abstract thought by means of algebra and geometry, and to concrete investigation by means of natural science.

### To Prevent Handicap

"The Departments of English are, of course, well aware that not all of these objectives are attainable within the existing facilities of the great majority of the high schools. They are well aware, also, that many factors must be weighed in altering curricula. The point made here is simply that high school students when entering college will be at a disadvantage, so far as English is concerned, if they have not attained the objectives outlined above.

"It is the well-considered opinion of the Departments, further, that, as preparation for the higher study of English, *high school work in foreign languages and history is as valuable as high school work in English itself.*

"Particularly regrettable is the postponement to college of fulfillment of the foreign language requirement. The earlier stages in the learning of any language are admirably adapted to secondary education, and are well within the reach of such students as we have in mind. Postponed to college, the requirement in foreign language restricts the election of courses which students need in English and in such supporting subjects as history and philosophy, makes it difficult for them to learn any one foreign language thoroughly, and renders it all but impossible for them to proceed to additional foreign languages desirable as tools and backgrounds in English. The study of a foreign language unfortunately takes much time; in Europe the period allotted to any language is commonly four to nine years. We regard it as highly important, therefore, that the student interested in English should come to college with the fullest equipment in language available in his high school."

Signed by the departments of English in 35 colleges and universities of Iowa.

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## What Are English Teachers Teaching?

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rious sciences of language. They are sciences, and in a world in which the prestige of science is so high, little need be said in their defence. Certainly nothing that I shall say is to be construed as an attack upon them. All honor to them and to the able scholars who profess them. One point only is relevant to our matter: we should not let the example of those rare persons who are at once good linguists and good critics mislead us into assuming that a sound discipline in linguistics in itself confers critical discrimination. So much for the English professor as scientist.

The second category is less easy to establish. I shall call it for want of a better term: the history of literature and history as reflected in literature. Again, probably no defence is necessary. The present-day department is so thoroughly committed to the study of literary history, it has labored so hard in this vineyard and with such fine success!—the prestige of the social sciences is so high, that there is little danger that the English professor as historian will be trampled out of existence. There is probably more danger that he will not recognize his function of historian for what it is. Incidentally, insofar as he does consciously recognize it, he probably strengthens his hand. He has the more incentive to equip himself properly in such fields as economics, philosophy, etc., and thus to set himself up as an able historian of culture.

The real danger is that a preoccupation with history will swallow up the critical function—that the memorizing of past critical judgments will be substituted for an initiation into the active critical process by which all such judgments are reached.

I hope that I have made my attitude perfectly clear up to this point. One who is professedly interested in literature ought to be the last person in the world to disparage the labors of the historian of ideas, or of metrical forms, or of literary development. Such studies are not only valuable in their own right. They are the most nearly indispensable tools that the critic may have. But—and this is the crux of my argument—the historical approach to literature is not enough. In practice, it has all but swallowed up what I shall call the third function of the English department, the study of literature as literature, the study of literature as an art.

I suppose that this is a statement which needs to be documented. It can be documented, though of course not in the few minutes I have at my disposal. But I appeal to your own experience as teachers of literature and I can at least invite you to glance at some of the more obvious bits of evidence: for example, the testimony of the textbooks, which with a few honorable exceptions, manage to talk about everything relating to literature but literature itself—books which admirably date the exhibit, annotate the text, relate it to biographical

facts, discuss the ideas which may be abstracted from it: but suddenly become weak and evasive when making a case for the exhibit's status as art; or which treat the student to some gush, or which ignore the subject entirely.

There is the testimony of the students. I am not measuring them by an impossible standard. It is not that most of them do not become aesthetic dialecticians. I submit simply that most of them have never learned to read. The use of rather simple symbolism completely stumps them—not freshmen, but graduate students with B.A.'s from some of our more distinguished universities. I. A. Richards' *Practical Criticism* is a casebook of the experiences of Cambridge University students with untitled, unidentified poems. The light which this book throws on the teaching of literature is merciless. Readers of the book are not likely to overestimate the success of the average English department here.

Lastly, there is the evidence of the English teachers themselves. Needless to say, it is the hardest evidence to get. For the English professor, whatever may be true of his critical acumen, is as wily as any one when it comes to keeping up appearances. Yet one may obtain evidence which is suggestive: the character of the learned journals, and their poverty of good criticism; the gap which yawns between our practicing writers and critics on the one hand and the academic critics on the other; the kind of literary judgments which the English professor may let fall, when relaxed, unguarded, in undress, and among friends.

Yet the teaching of literature is perhaps the characteristic function of the department of English. (In the naive eyes of the man in the street it is certainly the characteristic function, and the important function.) I submit that in the average department this function has almost gone by default. It is this situation which demands the organization of such a group as the CEA, and unless the CEA means to deal with this problem actively, I think that it might as well shut up shop. We do not need merely another organization.

I have stated the case in its most extreme terms; and yet, even so stated, I submit that the case for the CEA is a positive case. I envisage it not as a rival to any existing organization or as a substitute or replacement. I have suggested that it grows out of a real need, and that the activity it ought to foster is important but essentially neglected. To forestall one further misapprehension: in distinguishing among the various functions of the English department, I have meant to urge a distinction—not a separation. I think that we may understand the problem more clearly if we cease to think of the department as a seamless garment; but I have no wish on the other hand to tear it to rags. Nor do I think that acceptance of the distinctions I have suggested carries with it the implication that we must organize new departments.

And what specifically can be accomplished by approaching literature as literature? Can literature

be taught? Miss Willa Cather, in our last *News Letter* says that it cannot be "taught" in the sense that Latin can be taught" and by inference she asks for little more than that the student be "exposed" to the classics of literature in the hope that the student may be infected. I believe that her view is far too pessimistic. If I agreed with her on this point, I should be better satisfied with the present system. For exposure to the classics is being made now, and there are even occasional cases of successful infection. I think that she underestimates what the teacher can do, and I think the same underestimation underlies Dr. Canby's objection to courses in contemporary literature, an objection which she quotes with approval. Obviously, literature cannot be taught as Latin can be, but I think that it might be taught nearly as well as football is taught. I am quite in earnest. The analogy is a fair one. In both cases native ability will vary greatly from student to student, but good coaching is indispensable; and in both cases, a self-discipline must be acquired in action. No player is developed by merely studying diagrams of plays chalked on the blackboard. But the average student of literature gets little or no practice in trying to evaluate literature for himself. He is condemned to a perpetual skull practice. He needs, with proper coaching, to be allowed to make his own mistakes. The problem is difficult, assuredly; and therefore demands all the more that we give it our attention. It does not demand that we become fatalists, and funk the problem by assuming that critical perception comes unaccountably and accidentally by some act of God.

But these remarks indicate a faith on my part which is influential in determining my conception of what the CEA ought to be. I have no illusion that they dispose of the problem, which is a difficult one. I am sure that you share my eagerness to hear Mr. Ransom's paper on this subject to be given in the morning.

I hesitate, however, to leave this matter without a glance at one further factor which I believe has discouraged the English professor from stressing literature as literature. That is, the realization that value judgments are ultimately subjective. Perhaps he has been intimidated by the success which the exact scientists have achieved. He has admired their ability to add successive contributions or verified knowledge to the ever-increasing pyramid of science. He has himself been twitted for not being objective, for being unscientific. On occasion he has yearned to set up for a scientist himself. He has not succeeded. If my analysis is correct, it is impossible for him to succeed without deserting his characteristic function. For his pursuit of verifiable fact will carry him further and further away from the literary judgments on which he ought to speculate. The date of Shakespeare's burial is a fact and may be proved. But Shakespeare's superiority to Dekker or Shirley is not such a fact and cannot be proved in the same sense. Yet I hope that few

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## Mid-Atlantic C. E. A.

Upon invitation by the English Department of the University of Maryland, approximately forty representatives of colleges in Delaware, Maryland, and the District of Columbia met at College Park on February 10, and voted to constitute themselves a section of the College English Association. After the election of officers (Wilbur Owen Synperd, Delaware, President; Douglas Bement, George Washington, Vice President; Robert T. Fitzhugh, Maryland, Secretary-Treasurer), the group heard Mr. James E. Spitznas, State Supervisor of High School of Maryland, speak on "What the High Schools Are Doing in English, and Why." In the first place, the high school curriculum must recognize the great spread in the abilities of high school students and the fact that only about twenty percent of them go to college at all. Furthermore, only a few schools can offer different training in English to college preparatory students. For these reasons, instead of careful analysis of classics and the study of formal composition and grammar, the schools are trying to relate what their students read to those students' own experiences, and to draw what their students write from their experiences. The modified study of grammar is slowly returning, also. The schools are aware that the problem of teaching students to read accurately and to write clearly may not have been solved, but they believe that conditions are improving, and should improve more in the near future. The best evidence for this improvement in Maryland lies in the State Department Building on oral and written expressions based upon a comprehensive study of practices in the high schools of the state. Mr. Spitznas was followed by Professor Bement, who outlined the universal lament of college teachers that their students cannot study, cannot think, cannot write. And he suggested it was because they had never been held up to high standards in their secondary schooling. He then went on to describe one corrective for these deficiencies. George Washington University's experiment with a Writers' Laboratory to which students bring outlines of themes, and in which they make substantial progress toward completing a first draft, all under the guidance of their instructors.

After lunch, the meeting was opened for a vigorous and stimulating discussion of issues raised by the two speakers. The group finally agreed that the most pressing of the many problems of English teachers was that of the relations between high school and colleges, and it was decided to ask each of the colleges of Delaware, Maryland, the District of Columbia, and eastern West Virginia to define in specific terms what they felt to be the minimum training in English desirable for entering freshmen. The next meeting, on April 27, will agree on a set of proposals and will then invite representatives of the schools to meet with its committee in a common effort to solve common problems.

## What Are English Teachers Teaching?

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will question the desirability of dealing with the latter question. Indeed, if such questions are meaningless or irrelevant, then the departments of English might as well declare their bankruptcy and humbly petition the departments of history to accord them a little space in some corner of their offices. That might be preferable to the attempt to justify literary studies as an even foggier and more humbling social science.

According to the program I am to speak on the proposed publication for the CEA. I have purposely given most of my time to the purpose of the CEA itself; for the nature of the magazine, I think, is implied by that purpose; and one can perhaps best describe the magazine through describing the association. In brief, the magazine should deal with the pedagogical problems proper to a group of people who propose to deal seriously with literature as an art.

Whether the magazine should be launched at once, or whether it should continue for a time in the form of a newsletter (and the two letters thus far have been most interesting and stimulating), I do not know. I certainly have no special convictions on these points. I think that it is more important to take my last minute for what seems to me a more fundamental point.

The magazine will raise some very difficult editorial problems. In the first place the magazine will have to be edited — not merely supervised. There will be no easy objective standards on which the editor may rely, nor can he beg his critical questions by merely giving his readers what they want or what he thinks they want. He will have to risk making some people angry.

Obviously the editor will have to be a man who loves literature, but he must be made of sterner stuff than the mere appreciator. He definitely must not be, in that superlative phrase, one of those men who have grown mellow before they got ripe. Most of all, while having opinions of his own and an interest in theory, he must not be theory-ridden. He must have the tolerance which comes, not from timid indecision or bored indifference, but from a wish to test what he thinks true against the strongest arguments that can be made on the other side.

In saying this, I do not mean that the proposed magazine ought to be a super-literary magazine (though the field here is far from crowded). I do not envisage it as a happy-hunting ground for critics and aesthetes. Obviously, it ought to include and will include, in addition to articles on contemporary writers and revaluations of classic writers, discussion of curricular, accounts of methods, descriptions of experimental courses,—in short, discussion of all the manifold problems raised by the attempt to teach literature. Moreover, it will have to include the problems of teaching the student to write, not only on the highest but on the simplest of levels. Mr. Cudworth Flint in the

last News Letter makes most brilliantly the point that we can not rely on the bare bones of grammar in teaching the student to write. The problems of writing and reading interlock. Let the magazine be practical, as practical as we can make it. The problem is immediate. The hungry sheep look up and are not fed—and the dyspeptic goats as well. Many of this mixed flock, after traversing the green pastures of the average high school have never learned to eat. Our magazine ought to be practical, and as a practical magazine it ought to publish sample menus and recipes for tasty dishes calculated to tempt the jaded appetite. But if it is to deal with the problem adequately, it must sooner or later go into the matter of what constitutes an adequate diet and perhaps even the requirements of a good pasture. In short, if we are to treat our practical problems seriously, we shall scarcely be able to avoid making forays into criticism, both applied and theoretical. This prospect need not alarm us, if we will face it frankly. But above all, I want us to face it—not to turn aside to something safe and "objective." For we confront what is essentially a critical problem in meeting our most practical problem: the problem of teaching the student to read with some understanding and discrimination.

Cleath Brooks  
Louisiana State University

## Experiments In Illinois

(Continued from Page 2)

craftsmen, making use of such magazines as the New Republic, Harpers, etc., or of such collections as the Essay Annual.

In addition to the two major types of experiment mentioned above, several individual experiments will be conducted. One instructor will emphasize supplementary reading and will encourage a more critical selection of leisure reading, a fuller enjoyment and understanding of books read, and better composition of written reports on reading. Another teacher will work with a section composed exclusively of students in the College of Engineering, and will use text books and theme assignments appropriate to them. Several other instructors will be trying out recently published texts and lesson sheets.

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